

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism

PRLS 450—Research Methods (3 CH)  
Section 002; #72008  
Fall 2015

DAY/TIME: TR 10:30 – 11:45 AM                      LOCATION: SciTech Bull Run Hall 252  
PROFESSOR: Dr. Jason White                      EMAIL ADDRESS: jwhite35@gmu.edu  
OFFICE LOCATION: SciTech Bull Run Hall 210    PHONE NUMBER: 703-993-5879  
OFFICE HOURS: T&R 12:00 – 2:00 PM & by appointment

**PREREQUISITES**

60 credits and one of the following: STAT 250, DESC 210 OM 210, SOC 313, OM 250, or IT 250

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Covers the development of empirical research designs for both practical and theoretical problems in health, fitness, and recreation resources management. Includes literature review of hypothesized relationships, and formulation of research proposals. Fulfills writing intensive requirement in the major.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

At the completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. Define and demonstrate appropriate use of research terminology;
2. Critically evaluate published research in scientific journals and the popular press;
3. Formulate research problem statements;
4. Enumerate the values inherent in the practice of scientific research;
5. Conduct a thorough review of literature and synthesize the findings; and,
6. Prepare a sound and feasible research proposal.

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION STANDARDS:**

Upon completion of this course, students will meet the following professional accreditation standards from the

*Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT):*

7.02	Students graduating from the program shall be able to demonstrate the ability to design, implement, and evaluate services that facilitate targeted human experiences and <i>that</i> embrace personal and cultural dimensions of diversity.
------	---

*Commission on the Accreditation of Athletic Training Education competencies met*

PD 13	Describe and differentiate the types of quantitative and qualitative research and describe components and process of scientific research (including statistical decision-making) as it relates to athletic training research.
PD 14	Interpret the current research in athletic training and other related medical and health areas and apply the results to the daily practice of athletic training.
PD 4	Develop a research project (to include but not limited to case study, clinical research project, literature review) for an athletic training-related topic.

## **COURSE OVERVIEW**

### **Writing-Intensive Designation**

As this course has been designated “Writing-Intensive” (WI) – fulfilling in part the WI requirement for all HFRR majors – you are required to complete at least 3,500 words of graded writing assignments. A series of writing exercises will be completed throughout the semester, thoroughly critiqued, and graded. Together, these will form the basis for your final research proposal. It is to your benefit to study and incorporate the comments given, as each assignment builds upon the next.

### **Attendance and Participation**

Attendance is required for this class. Arriving to class late or leaving early will be counted as an absence. Students are expected to show up prepared to class and participate during class activities. Students who know they will need to miss a class for a legitimate reason should contact the instructor before the class. Students who unexpectedly miss a class for an excused reason should contact the instructor within 24 hours of missing the class. Make-up tests, quizzes, assignments, or other grades will be granted for excused absences only. Excused absences include: serious illness, official university excused absences and extenuating circumstances. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor in order to obtain the make-up work.

### **Academic Load**

In addition to attending the lectures there will be regular assignments that may require anywhere from 5-15 hours of work per week. Additionally, regular readings will be assigned to students. Students are expected to complete all outside work on time. Extensions will not be granted on assignments unless an extenuating circumstance arises. The purpose of the assignments is to aid students in learning the material.

### **Honor Code**

Students are held to the standards of the George Mason University Honor Code (see <http://honorcode.gmu.edu> for details). Violations, including cheating and plagiarism, will be reported to the Honor Committee. Student assignments may be put through plagiarism detecting software.

### **Assignments**

All assignments must be typed unless specifically told not to. A loss of points will occur for improper grammar and spelling. It is recommended students save all assignments on their personal computers and/or a back-up device.

### **Class Delivery**

The course is a mix of a lecture and discussion course. However, other approaches may be used to facilitate learning. These include: videos, demonstrations and in-class activities. Overall this will be a highly interactive class and students will be encouraged to participate.

### **Technology Use during Class**

As per GMU policy, all sound emitting technology is required to be turned off during the class meeting time. No sound emitting technology (e.g., cell phones, smart phones, iPads, Tablets, pagers, etc.) is allowed at any time during the class period. Students who are observed using any form of technology inappropriately (e.g., sending text messages from cell phones, visiting social networking sites from laptops, etc.) will be dismissed from class for the day, counted as an absence, and not permitted to make up missed assignments.

## **Correspondence**

The preferred method of communication outside of class is email. Emails should originate from a George Mason email account and be in a professional format. If email does not originate from a George Mason University account, the instructor will not reply to the email. Emails should be written concisely and rechecked for clarity.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

GMU is an Honor Code University; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? First, it means that when you are responsible for a task, you will be the one to perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives and traditions. When in doubt, please ask for guidance and clarification.

## **GENERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES:**

Written communication is one of the foundation requirements of Mason's general education curriculum. Mason's nationally recognized writing program emphasizes writing as a process: it is not simply a way of communicating already formulated thoughts, but a way of discovering, exploring and developing new ideas. On your way to completing your proposal, you will go through the recursive processes of researching, drafting, and revising and will engage in critical thinking at all stages. As part of the written communication component and in addition to our course objectives, upon successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Analyze and synthesize research using methods appropriate to Recreation, Health, and Tourism (RHT);
- Make reasoned, well-organized arguments with introductions, thesis statements, supporting evidence, and conclusions appropriate to RHT;
- Use credible evidence to include, as applicable, data from credible primary and/or secondary sources, integrated and documented accurately according to AMA and/or APA style;
- Employ rhetorical strategies suited to the purpose(s) and audience(s) for the writing, to include appropriate vocabulary, voice, tone, and level of formality;
- Produce writing that employs the organizational techniques, formats, and genres typical to RHT; and,
- Produce writing that demonstrates proficiency in standard edited American English, including correct grammar/syntax, sentence structure, word choice, and punctuation.

For additional information, please see <https://assessment.gmu.edu/Genedassessment/outcomes.cfm>

## **REQUIRED READINGS**

Matthews T., D. & Kostelis K., T. (2011) Designing and Conducting Research in Health and Human Performance. Jossey-Bass.

Additional readings/articles may be assigned. These will be posted on Blackboard.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL**

Supplementary materials will be used in class and posted on Blackboard. Please print these materials and bring them to class so that you have access to them when needed.

## EVALUATION

**Quizzes** – Unannounced Short quizzes and exercises may be given for each class.

**Research Proposal** – The creation of a research proposal is a requirement of this course. The research proposal includes a series of tasks that will be thoroughly critiqued and graded. Together, these will form the basis for your research proposal. It is to your benefit to incorporate the comments given into your final research proposal. The guidelines and grading criteria for these tasks will be available on Blackboard.

This course will be graded on a point system, with a total of 940 possible points.

	<b>Points</b>
<b>Assignments – 60%</b>	
#1 Topic Selection	10
#2 Article Review & Presentation	25
#3 Introduction, Literature Review, Purpose Statement, Hypotheses	50
#4 Sample Plan (55)/Methods (45)	40
#5 Data Analysis Plan	30
#6 Presentation	50
#7 Abstract	15
#8 Final Research Proposal	50
Quizzes – 15%	
Attendance/Participation – 5%	
Exams – 20%	
<b>TOTAL</b>	

## Grading Scale

A = 94 – 100	B+ = 87 – 89	C+ = 77 – 79	D = 60 – 69
A- = 90 – 93	B = 84 – 86	C = 74 – 76	F = 0 – 59
	B- = 80 – 83	C- = 70 – 73	

## Assignment Summaries

*Note – All assignments will be due prior to the start of class on the day they are due. They can be submitted via email/Blackboard.*

### 1. Topic Selection Assignment

The intent of this assignment is to encourage an early start on your research proposal including your topic selection and literature search.

### 2. Article Review and Presentation

The intent of this assignment is to increase your familiarity with quantitative evidence-based peer-reviewed journal articles. Select one of the articles you are planning to use for your research proposal. Read the article thoroughly. Summarize and critique the article. You will present (5 minutes) a

summary of the key points from your article. This will serve as an opportunity to improve your oral communication.

### **3. Introduction and Review of Literature**

The intent of this assignment is to apply your curiosity, in addition to your conceptual and practical understanding of your topic to asking questions and defining research problems. Specifically, you are to write an introduction to your research proposal, a specific statement of the problem, an integrated review of the pertinent literature, identification of variables, and testable hypotheses.

### **4. Sampling Plan and Methods**

The intent of this assignment is to describe the population, the sampling design, and the target sample size appropriate for evaluating your hypotheses. In addition, you will identify the research design to be used, measurement tools available and detailing the data collection procedures. This assignment also includes a discussion of how you would validate and confirm the reliability of your instrument, in addition to a discussion of the possible ethical problems and their solutions for your study

### **5. Analysis Plan**

The intent of this assignment is to develop data analysis plan on how you would proceed to analyze your data if you were to conduct your proposed study. Your plan must include the appropriate descriptive and inferential statistics.

### **6. Presentation**

The intent of this assignment is for you to share your research proposal with your colleagues via a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation. This assignment will allow you to gain experience in oral presentation skills. As part of the experience, your colleagues & I may ask questions about your study, and we will offer a summary critique intended to help you improve your final written proposal.

### **7. Abstract**

The intent of this assignment is for you to write a brief and concise summary of the larger research proposal project. This assignment will allow you to quickly describe for the reader the content and scope of the proposal as is commonly seen in peer-reviewed articles.

### **8. Final Research Proposal**

The intent of this assignment is for you to apply your conceptual and practical understanding of your research topic to prepare a final and complete research proposal. Your proposal should illustrate your familiarity with problem formation and hypothesis development, review and critical analysis of the scholarly literature related to your study, justification of appropriate methodology, and consideration of the implications of your research. This assignment is a revision and extension of all content included in previous assignments.

### **Class Activities & Assignments**

In-class activities will be assigned during the class meeting and due at the end of the course meeting. Out of class assignments are listed on the syllabus and will be submitted at the beginning of the corresponding class meeting time. **NO LATE assignments will be accepted.**

### **Final Grades:**

Once your FINAL GRADE at the end of the semester is posted on mymasonportal, you will have 24 hours to inquire about it. After that period, your grade will be posted as final.

## NAME

Your name **MUST** be on your papers/exams when you turn them in. Failure to put your name will result in a 0 for the assignment/exam.

## Blackboard REQUIREMENTS

If students in this course are needed to submit assessments via Blackboard (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a onetime course or part of an undergraduate minor) for student outcome tracking, the instructor can require all assessments be submitted via Blackboard at any time during the course. Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in Blackboard. In this case, failure to submit the assessment to Blackboard will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required Blackboard submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

## GRADING

Every attempt will be made to grade and return assignments in a timely manner to provide students with constructive feedback. To provide students the opportunity to fully assess the feedback provided on graded assignments, the professor will be happy to answer any questions at the next class period following the return of the assignments or during the professor's office hours. The professor acknowledges the passion with regards to grades, but unprofessional and uncivil behavior either in person or through other modes of communication will not be tolerated.

## TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Date				Topic & potential in class assignments	Readings/Assignments Due
#1	T	Sept	1	Introduction to PRLS	Ch. 1-2
#2	R	Sept	3	Information retrieval and problem development; Developing research topics	Ch. 2-3
#3	T	Sept	8	Current research examples and review	
#4	R	Sept	10	Ethical considerations in research	<b>Proposal Topic Assignment</b> Ch. 8
#5	T	Sept	15	Problem presentation and overview; Matching questions with methods	<b>Article Review Assignment</b>
#6	R	Sept	17	Article summary presentations; Literature review	
Date				Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
#7	T	Sept	22	Writing the introduction	Ch. 4

#8	R	Sept	24	Proposal development and sampling	
#9	T	Sept	29	Review of literature	Ch. 9
#10	R	Oct	1	Reliability and validity	Ch. 10
#11	T	Oct	6	Collecting credible data	<b>Intro/Lit Review Assignment</b>
#12	R	Oct	8	Quantitative research methods	Ch. 5
#13	T	Oct	13	Qualitative research methods	Ch. 6
#14	R	Oct	15	Mixed research methods	Ch. 7
#15	T	Oct	20	Data analysis/statistics	Ch. 11-13; <b>Sampling Assignment</b>
#16	R	Oct	22	Data analysis/statistics	
#17	T	Oct	27	Proposal data analysis planning	
#18	R	Oct	29	Results and discussion	Ch. 14-15; <b>Analysis Assignment</b>
#19	T	Nov	3	Defending your research	
#20	R	Nov	5	Creating an abstract	
#21	T	Nov	10	Creating professional presentations	
#22	R	Nov	12	Peer review and critique	<b>Abstract Assignment</b>
#23	T	Nov	17	Research conferences and invited talks	
#24	R	Nov	19	Presentations	<b>Presentation Assignment</b>
#25	T	Nov	24	Presentations	
#26	R	Nov	26	Thanksgiving Holiday	
#27	T	Dec	1	Presentations	
<b>Date</b>				<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings/Assignments Due</b>
#28	R	Dec	3	Presentations and feedback	

#29	R	Dec	10	<i>Final Proposals</i>	<b>Final Proposal Due</b>
-----	---	-----	----	------------------------	---------------------------

*Note: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the course syllabus and/or schedule at any time. Students will always be informed of any changes made*

### *Student Expectations*

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>].
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

### *Campus Resources*

- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].
- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism, please visit our website [See <http://rht.gmu.edu/>].

**PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR:** Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

CORE VALUES COMMITMENT: The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles.

